The Duty of Daily frequenting the Publick Service of the Church.

Recommended in a

SERMON

Preached in a CHAPEL

At *Wragby* in *Lincoln-ſhire*, Erected to that Purpoſe by

Sir EDMUND TURNOR, Kt.

And Conſecrated by the Lord Biſhop of *Lincoln* the 18*th*. Day of *July*, 1697.

By *John Adamſon*, M. A. Rector of *Burton-Coggles* in *Lincoln-ſhire*.

Publiſh'd at the deſire of ſeveral Perſons then preſent.

LONDON,

Printed by *Ben. Griffin* for *Sam. Keble*, at the *Turk's-Head*, over againſt *Fetter-lane*, in *Fleet ſtreet*. 1698.

TO

Sir *Edmund Turnor*, Kt.

SIR,

AS by manifold great Favours You have a Right to all the Services I am capable of paying You, You have yet a more peculiar one to the Dedication of this Sermon, in that it was firſt Preached, and is now Publiſhed by Your Commands. This, I hope, will in part excuſe me to the World for troubling it with ſo plain a Diſcourſe; and the Pious cogent Reaſon, with which You was pleaſed to enforce Your Commands, I cannot doubt will do the reſt, (viz.) That You might thereby have Copies of it for thoſe ſeveral Pariſhes, where Your exemplary Piety hath effectually provided for the daily Performance of publick Prayer.

Whilſt, Sir, Your pious Zeal thus worthily Encourages and Promotes the Service of God, (of which I could give many and great Inſtances, but that I well know Your ſingular Humility will not permit me,) I could not; I think, I ought not, decline any thing in my Power, which in Your Opinion may contribute ſomething (tho' but a little) to ſo excellent an End.

If this plain Diſcourſe, adapted to a plain but honeſt People, may (by the bleſſing of God) work

upon any such, a greater Reverence for the Houses of Prayer, and a greater Diligence and Seriousness in frequenting them, I shall not regard what Opinion the Nice and Censorious may have of it, or of me for Publishing it. My first aim therein being to promote the Honor of our Lord, the Interest of our Religion, and the Good of Souls; and a secondary, Sir, to testifie to the World my ready Obedience and great Obligations to Your self. In a deep Sense of which, and the much Good You daily do, I must ever pray (as I am sure great Numbers are obliged) that it may please God long to continue so great a Blessing, as You are, to our Religion, to our Church, to the worthy Clergy of it, to Your Family, to the Poor, to Your Friends, even to all who are any ways deserving and capable of Receiving Advantage from such a Fountain of Exemplary Piety, true Goodness, and diffusive Charity: And that in the other World You may largely receive a Glorious Recompence for all the Good You have so liberally done in this; particularly to,

Honoured SIR,

Your most Obliged, and most

Faithful humble Servant,

John Adamson.

St. *Matthew* XXI. part of the 13*th*. Verſe.

My Houſe ſhall be called the Houſe of Prayer.

THESE Words repreſent unto us our Bleſſed Saviour reſtoring the Temple of God to the Holy Uſes, to which it had been dedicated, and expreſs his Zeal for the Honour due to ſuch Places, and his juſt Indignation againſt all Prophanations and Abuſes of them.

The Temple at *Jeruſalem*, was ſolemnly dedicated to the Service and Worſhip of God; a practice which has obtain'd in all the Ages of Chriſtianity, at leaſtwiſe ever ſince the Reign of *Conſtantine*, as *Euſebius* acquaints us, * in reference to our Churches and Places of Religious Worſhip.

* *Hiſt. Eccleſ.* l. 10. c. 3.

But the corrupt Prieſts amongſt the Jews had groſly perverted it to other purpoſes, ſubſervient to their carnal and ſecular deſigns. The occaſion which they took for ſo doing, was this: Againſt the Feaſt of the Paſſover, the Jews from all Countries reſorted to *Jeruſalem*, to keep that Solemn Feaſt there. To ſupply them with Sacrifices (which many of them who came from *Far*, could not poſſibly bring with them;) a great number of Cattle were ſlain for that purpoſe by the Prieſts,

which they ſold to the Rich (no doubt, at a great Advantage;) and for the Poorer ſort of People, they provided (as the Law directed) Turtle Doves and Young Pidgeons. And becauſe many Strangers could not be provided with thoſe half Shekels (in value about 15 *d.* of *Engliſh* Coin) which by the Law were required to be Yearly offer'd †; nor with ſmaller pieces of Mony to make their payments for thoſe Sacrifices which they wanted; they therefore ſet up Money-Changers to ſupply them in both Caſes by way of Exchange, either for other Money, or (with the Poorer ſort of People) for other things in lieu of Money ‖; but in doing this, they uſed great Exaction, and are therefore ſharply rebuked by our Saviour (in the words following the Text) under that hainous Character of *a Den of Thieves*; and ſo they plainly appear guilty of a double crime, prophaning the Temple by their Merchandize, and grinding the Poor by their Oppreſſion.

† Exod. 30. 15, 16.

‖ *Godwyn's* Jewiſh Antiq l. 6. c. 10. And *Pool's* Synopſis *in loc.*

Of theſe their wicked Practices, they had long before been admoniſhed by the Prophets *; and by our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf, ſoon after his entrance upon his Prophetick Office, and that in a very mild and gentle manner: † *Take theſe things hence, make not my Father's Houſe an Houſe of Merchandize.* But ſtill they perſiſted in their Wickedneſs, as even Chriſtians too often do, againſt all admonitions and perſwaſions to the contrary; and therefore in this place of the Text, our Bleſſed Saviour, a little before his Death, finding them incorrigible under more gentle Methods; he, as he was the Son of that God, whoſe Temple was thus prophaned, and in a juſt Zeal for the Honour of his Father,

* So ſome interpret *Jer.* 11. 5. and *Iſa.* 26. 10.

† Joh. 2. 16.

Father, † *Caſt the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, overthrew the Tables of the Money-Changers, and the Seats of them that ſold Doves:* Reminding them of what before they had often heard, but now either had forgotten, or elſe wilfully neglected, in the words of the Text, *My Houſe ſhall be called* (*i.e.* ſhall be, according to the frequent ſignification of that Phraſe in holy Scripture, *) *a Houſe of Prayer.*

† Matt. 21. 12.

* So it is to be underſtood in *Iſa.* 9. 6. *Matt.* 5. 19. *Luke* 1. 32, 35, 35. *Rev.* 19. 13. See Dr. *Hammond* on *Matt.* 2. 23. note l.

But how could this be, may ſome ſay, A ſingle Perſon, deſpiſed, rejected, and probably deſigned by them in a few days to be crucified, be able to drive out ſo great a number of obſtinate Men, backed by the Powers then in being, wedded to their Intereſt, and much exaſperated to ſee it ſo obſtructed and defeated by the ſo much by them vilified Jeſus? Whence was it that none of them had Courage enough to reſiſt him, or ſo much as open a Mouth (as far as appears to us) in their Juſtification, but tamely ſubmitted to his Rebuke, and ſuffer'd themſelves to be driven out?

This muſt be reſolv'd into the Divine Power of our Lord, and was one of the miraculous Effects of it. Such a Majeſty at that time appeared in his Countenance, and ſuch an Awe and Dread it wrought upon his moſt ſpiteful Adverſaries, as brought them to an abſolute Complyance with his Will, and perfect Submiſſion to his Commands.

Which ſhews how utterly unable the moſt daring ſinners are to withſtand our Lord, when he comes in good earneſt (as ſometime he certainly will) to execute Vengeance upon them. None of them durſt oppoſe one word, when our Bleſſed Lord

with an Authority becoming his Station, and his Zeal for his Father's Honour, urg'd upon them the words of the Text, *My Houſe ſhall be called* (or ſhall be) *the Houſe of Prayer.*

Having as briefly as I well could, ſhewn you the Occaſion and Deſign of theſe words, every one will eaſily diſcern that they inſtruct us in this great Truth, that Places dedicated to God and his Worſhip are to be treated with Reverence, and not to be employ'd in any prophane or common Uſes, but only in Religious Duties; particularly that of Prayer, which is the principal of them: So has God declared by his Prophet *Iſaiah* (c. 56. v. 7.) and ſo our Bleſſed Saviour from him in the Text, *My Houſe ſhall be called the Houſe of Prayer.*

Prayer is the Duty, which God in the Old Teſtament, and our Bleſſed Saviour in the New, were pleaſed to make Choice of to repreſent the others by which are to be performed in Places ſet apart for Religious Worſhip. And *Prayer* is the eſpecial Duty for the performance of which the Place this day Conſecrated was Erected by your pious Benefactor; and therefore of this Duty only I ſhall Diſcourſe unto you at this time.

And here I might uſefully enlarge on the more general parts of *Prayer*; as,

1. *Supplication*, When we ask of God any Bleſſing we want either for our Souls or Bodies.

2. *Interceſſion*, When we Pray for others, even all Mankind; but more eſpecially for our Governours and the Houſhold of Faith.

3. *Thankſ-*

3. *Thankſgiving*, When we recount with grateful Hearts the many Bleſſings both Spiritual and Temporal which we enjoy; give God the Glory of them, and our ſelves to him in gratitude for them.

All theſe general Parts of Prayer we are directed to by the Apoſtle *, and are all of them ſufficiently provided for in our excellent Liturgy, which highly recommends it to our great Eſteem and conſtant Uſe. * 1 Tim. 2. 1, 2.

I might alſo ſeaſonably enlarge on the moſt needful, and yet too commonly neglected, Qualifications of Prayer; as,

1. *Purity and Holineſs*, Since we know that *God heareth not Sinners* † (*i. e.* wilful and impenitent Ones); that the Apoſtle requires that when we Pray *we lift up Holy Hands*; ‖ and that *the Sacrifice of the wicked is an Abomination to the Lord; but the Prayer of the Upright is his delight.* * † St. Joh. 9. 31. ‖ 1 Tim. 2. 8. * Prov. 15. 8.

2. *Serious Attention* to our Prayers; for, *then* only we can be ſaid to Pray, and *then* only expect to be heard: Inaſmuch as our Bleſſed Saviour has ſet the Mark of Hypocriſie upon ſuch Prayers as are not accompanied with the Heart, and plainly tells us they are all in vain, Matth. 15. 7, 8, 9. *Ye Hypocrites, ye draw nigh unto me with your mouth, and honour me with your lips, but your heart is far from me; but in vain do you worſhip me.*

3. *Fervour and Earneſtneſs*; with all the Affection and Devotion of our Souls, ſuch as may teſtifie we really deſire the things we Pray for.

This

This is required of us by the Apostle, that we *be* ‖ Rom. 12. 11. *fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord* ‖; This is that which makes our Prayers very prevalent with God, *James* 5. 16. *The fervent Prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* Even amongst the Jews, the Talmudists taxing the Peop'es negligence in Prayer, one of the three faulty sorts of their *Amen* recounted by them is, a faint *Amen* †, when they pray'd without Fervency.

† *Godwin's* Jewish Antiquit. l. 2. c. 2.

4. *Humility*, both in our Souls and Bodies. In our Souls, acknowledging our unworthiness to appear before so great a Majesty, to receive from him any of those Blessings we ask, but only upon the account of his Bounty and Mercy, and the Merits of his Son. And Humility in our Bodies, expressing this Humility of our Souls; putting up our Petitions to the Majesty of Heaven for the greatest Blessings we can receive upon our Knees, according to the Example of Holy Men in Scripture ‖, of the blessed Apostles *, and even of Christ himself, who kneeled down when he pray'd to his heavenly Father, St. *Luke* 22. 41. Accordingly we read of the Primitive Christians, That to *Sit at Prayers was ever held by them a posture of great Rudeness and Irreverence* †. And *Tertullian* falls heavy upon some that used it in his time (about two hundred years after Christ) telling them, *They acted contrary to Scripture and were Irreligious in so doing; and represents them as if they had a mind to reproach God to his face, and tell him that they are weary of the Duty of Praying to him.* "If it be an irrevent thing (*as he goes "on in arguing with them*) to sit down before one "for

‖ *David*, *Psal.* 95. 6. *Solomon*, 2 Chron. 6. 13. *Daniel*, c. 6. v. 10.

* St. *Stephen*, Acts 7. 60. St. *Peter*, Acts 9. 40. St *Paul*, Acts 20 36. & 21. 5.

† Dr. *Cave's* Prim. Christ. part. 1. c. 9.

Tertull. *de Orat.* c. 12. p. 134. *Contra Scripturam fecerit, si quis in Cathedrâ aut subsellio sederit; factum isthuc irreligiosum est, nisi exprobramus Deo quod nos Oratio fatigaverit*, &c.

"for whom thou haſt a great Reverence and Ve-
"neration; how much more does it ſavour of Ir-
"religion to do ſo in the Preſence of the Living
"God, even while the Angel is yet ſtanding by
"thee to carry up the Prayer to Heaven.

Theſe, together with a *true Faith* and a *Depen-dance* upon the alone *Merits of Chriſt* (which I preſume I need not mention in this place) are the chief of thoſe Qualifications (and yet too commonly neglected) with which we muſt take care we put up our Prayers to God, if we hope to have them accepted by him; and theſe I might uſefully have enlarg'd upon. But it muſt ſuffice thus briefly to have hinted them, that I may the more largely recommend unto you.

5. In the Fifth place, *Frequency* in this Duty of Prayer, and that in Publick, as often as you have Opportunities; as you of this place will now daily have.

This I would earneſtly recommend to your ſe-rious Practice upon theſe three Accounts. In that

I. It is much for the Honour of God and our Religion.

II. Very Advantageous to our ſelves in refe-rence to this World.

III. It greatly promotes a good Life (in reference to the Happineſs of the next) in all thoſe that ſin-cerely make uſe of it.

1. We ought to be frequent in this Duty of Publick Prayer, becauſe it is much for the Honour of God and our Religion. As often as we Pray unto him with Seriouſneſs, we acknowledge and adore

adore the Soveraignty, Wiſdom, Juſtice, and Power, and Mercy of God; and in doing all this, we muſt needs be granted to Honour him, and perform a Service highly acceptable to him.

When we Pray unto him, we evidently declare that we own his Dominion over us, and that he has a Right to govern us, and that all our Services are his due, tho' we too often unworthily alienate them to prophane and wicked Purpoſes.

We alſo acknowledge his Wiſdom to be infinite, that as he throughly underſtands all the Actions of our Lives and ſecrets of our Hearts, all our Wants and Neceſſities, ſo he beſt knows how to make the moſt ſuitable Proviſion for them.

We likewiſe hereby magnifie the Juſtice of God, particularly in our Confeſſions and Deprecations; knowing him ready to paſs an impartial Sentence upon us for our Sins.

Again, in all our Prayers to God, we muſt be ſuppoſed to acknowledge his Power to be infinitely great to puniſh our Sins; to reward our Well-doing; and to ſupply all our Wants.

Laſtly, We hereby acknowledge the Mercy of God to be infinite; without a great Senſe of which, it would be both Folly and Arrogancy, for us to approach unto him, particularly to lay open before him all the miſcarriages of our Life, which generally ('tis to be fear'd) are ſo many and ſo heinous, that we could never hope for any Pardon to them, but that we believe God to be very ready to embrace every true repenting Sinner. This ſhould ſtrongly engage us to Frequency in our Prayers, which you ſee do ſo much magnifie the glorious Attributes of God, which he loves

to

to ſee acknowledg'd by the Sons of Men. And ſurely the more Publick this Acknowledgment is, the more Honour it gives to God, and is conſequently the more acceptable to him.

So very acceptable to him is this Duty of publick Prayer; that when *David* had but a thought to build an Houſe for this purpoſe, God told him that *he did well*, even when he had done nothing, neither might do any thing, only had the Deſign of doing it in his heart and purpoſe *. * 2 Chron. 6. 8.

The like gracious Acceptance of ſuch Acts of Piety our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf aſſures us of, under the Goſpel, in that he was effectually prevailed with to heal the Servant of the Centurion, being recommended to him under this Character, *That he had built them a Synagoguge* †; a place for the better Conveniency of their Religious Worſhip. † St. Luke 7. 5.

May this Chapel this day Conſecrated to the like uſe, and for the ſame reaſon, find the like gracious Acceptance with our Lord!

'Tis alſo much for the Honour of our Religion, and tends to gain Proſelytes to it, (which alſo is another way of giving Honour to God.) This is ſo univerſally acknowledged, That even all Religions (however falſe or Superſtitious) will have their Daily Publick Offices; thus it is amongſt the Jews, Mahometans, and Papiſts. And is not this a great reproach to Us, whoſe Worſhip is much more Pure, to fall ſo very ſhort of them in the Exerciſe of it? Where is our Zeal

for the Honour of our excellent Religion, to ſuffer them ſo much to out-doe Us in the Frequency of Religious Offices; which gains a mighty Reputation to them, but caſts a reproach upon us?

2. *Frequency* in Publick Prayers is very advantageous to our ſelves in reference to this World, being the likelieſt way to obtain any Bleſſings we deſire or ſtand in need of, either for our ſelves or others.

* *St.* Jam. 5. 16. St. *James* tells us *, That the ſingle *Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much*; and gives us a Proof

† Ver. 17, 18. of it in † *Elias*, by this means ſhutting and opening Heaven, firſt againſt and then for Rain. And if Prayer be thus powerful when ſingle, what is it when Social, when in Publick, in a whole Congregation, in a whole Nation? When there is a pious Conſpiracy of fervent Prayers from Conſenting Hearts, and concurring Lips, all at once making (as it were) an Aſſault upon the Almighty, with the Holy violence of a ſtrong importunity to extort a Bleſſing from him. God delights to be thus wreſtled with; and is not able, becauſe not willing to deny any thing, convenient for his People, that is thus requeſted of him.

‖ Apol. 39. A. Thus ſpeaks *Tertullian* ‖ *Coimus ad Deum, quaſi manu facta precationibus ambiamns, Hæc vis Deo grata eſt.* "We come (*ſays he*) by Troops to "the place of Aſſembly, that being banded (as "it were) together into an Army, we may be-"ſiege God with our Prayers and Petitions; this kind

"kind of violence is very pleasing and grateful "to him.

Our Saviour himself saith *, *If two of you shall agree on Earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven.* Hereupon St. *Ignatius* argues, *If the Prayer of one or two be of so great prevalence, how much more will the Prayer of the whole Church be prevalent.* And no wonder is it that they should be so, when they have one amongst them, concurring with them in their Petitions, whom God always hears, even his only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

* St. Matt. 18. 19.

Εἰ γὰρ ἑνὸς καὶ δευτέρου προσευχὴ τοσαύτην ἰσχὺν ἔχει, ὥστε τὸν Χριστὸν ἐν αὐτοῖς διαπαντὸς μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς Ἐπισκόπου καὶ πάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας προσευχὴ, σύμφωνον ἀνιέσα πρὸς Θεὸν, πείσει παραγενέσθαι αὐτοῖς πάντα τὰ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀτήματα. Epist. ad Ephes. p. 122.

And indeed his Presence with them, himself Assigns for the reason of their Prevalency with his Father; For (says he) *where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them* †.

† St. Matt. 18. 20.

And as *Publick Prayer* is thus advantageous to us in respect to our Personal Wants, so is it no less in respect to the Community, to the Church of God, to our Governours, to our Relations and Friends, even to all Mankind, for whom our excellent Liturgy has furnish'd us with suitable Prayers, even for all sorts and Conditions of Men.

(*Hic* (*sc. Deus*) *bellum Lachrymosum, hic miseram Pestemq; a populo & Principe* Cæsare
Vestra motus aget prece. Horat. l. 1. Od. 21.)

Which Prayers, when a whole Nation about the ſame time and in the ſame words of our Liturgy, duely puts up to God in the Name of his dear Son, ſurely they may expect to prevail much more, than when put up by ſingle Perſons in private; eſpecially if we add God's gracious Promiſe to hear thoſe Prayers more eſpecially which are made to him in his own Houſe, in 2 *Chron.* 7. 12, 15, 16. The Lord appeared to *Solomon*, and ſaid unto him, *I have choſen this place to my ſelf for an houſe of Sacrifice; now mine Eyes ſhall be open, and mine Ears attent unto the Prayer that is made in this Place. For now have I choſen and ſanctified this Houſe, that my Name may be there for ever: And mine Eyes and mine Heart ſhall be there perpetually.*

3. Frequency in Publick Prayer greatly promotes a good Life in all thoſe that ſincerely make uſe of it. And that both by it's natural Tendency, and by the Bleſſing of God.

1. By it's natural Tendency. Can Men that conſider any thing, daily Confeſs their Sins unto God in his own Houſe, and in the Preſence of the Holy Angels and a publick Congregation, and yet dare to continue in them, and boldly commit them again at the next Temptation? Can ſuch eaſily there daily Pray, (as we do in our excellent Liturgy,) that they may hereafter live a Godly, Righteous and Sober Life; and yet allow themſelves in groſs Acts of Impiety againſt God; in deliberate Acts of Injuſtice or Oppreſſion againſt Man; or in the heinous Acts of Intemperance and

and Uncleánneſs (ſo directly oppoſite to that Sobriety they daily Pray for, and thereby acknowledge they ought to Practice,) or in any other notorious ſcandalous Sin?

Can it be imagin'd, that when they ſo frequently repeat that pious Petition with their own Lips, their Conſciences ſhould not ſometimes, nay often ſeverely rebuke them for ſuch groſs Violations of it, and give an effectual Check to ſuch Practices; which the Cuſtomary Neglecters of Publick Prayer, eaſily may, and too often do purſue, without any Senſe of their Guilt or Danger.

Further, by daily Reading or hearing read at the Publick Service of our Church, a Portion of the Pſalms of *David*, ſo full of Piety and Devotion; and ſome Chapters in the Bible (too generally, I fear, neglected by Chriſtians in private) where we have excellent Rules and Examples of Holy Living, and powerful Motives to it, This muſt needs be granted to conduce very much to the directing and reforming our Lives.

If this bleſſed Effect be not wrought upon all who come daily to the Publick Prayers of our Church, more is the Pity! But the Fault is in themſelves and not in our Prayers. If ſome frequent them only in Formality and Hypocriſie, 'tis no wonder they are never the better for them. Do thou frequent them with Sincerity, Devotion, and Attention, and be aſſured thou ſhalt receive great ſpiritual Improvement by them; as I doubt not but thouſands of the ſincere Members of our Church, to their inexpreſſible Comfort, do find.

2. This

2. This advantage of a good Life by Frequency in Publick Prayer is also (and that chiefly) to be ascribed to the Blessing of God, and the powerful working of his Grace upon us; which Blessing is promised to us, and to be obtain'd by us only in the serious Use of the Duty of Prayer, so qualified as I before hinted. Thus our Blessed Saviour instructs us, * *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find: Knock and it shall opened unto you*; where that he refers particularly to this Blessing of his Grace and Holy Spirit, appears from these following words †, *If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven* give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? This I acknowledge is spoken of Prayer in in general; but it holds true of Publick Prayer with a great advantage, as you have already heard.

* St. Luk 11. ver. 9.

† Ver. 13.

If then Frequency in Publick Prayer does thus promote the Honour of God and our Religion; if it procures those Blessings we want either for our selves or others, and greatly tends to promote a good Life; if we have any regard to the Honour of God and our Religion, if any real desire to be Happy here or hereafter, we shall rejoyce in all Opportunities of Publick Prayer, and heartily endeavour so to Order our Affairs, that nothing may hinder our constant Attendance at them.

And if Frequency in Publick Prayer be so needfull a Duty, as you have seen, the like Frequency

cy (and that with the greateſt Serioufneſs) in receiving the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (which is the higheſt Solemnity of Prayer) is, upon the Account of the ſame and greater Reaſons, as needful a Duty, where there are the happy Opportunities of it. And in this alſo the worthy Founder of your Chapel hath very piouſly provided for you.

And as I underſtand many of you purpoſe (very commendably) to Communicate on this day, ſo I hope, and earneſtly exhort, you will do it with that Sincerity in a hearty Repentance for your Sins, and ſerious Reſolutions of a Holy Life, that you may receive much ſpiritual Comfort and Improvement by it; and then you will even rejoyce in the frequent Opportunities of this Holy Sacrament in this place, and make it your conſtant Care, as it is your certain Duty, to diſpoſe your ſelves for a worthy partaking of them. Conſider well, and always bear it in mind, how great your Guilt will be, how heavy your Condemnation, if ye ſhall ſlight and neglect, or any ways abuſe ſuch powerful means of Salvation.

But I muſt not inſiſt upon this copious Subject. I only crave your Patience whilſt I obſerve unto you three or four practical Inferences from what has been diſcourſed.

INFERENCES.

1. If theſe Places be Houſes of Prayer, and, by our Saviour's own direction, not to be employ'd in common Uſes, then let us always treat them

them with Reſpect and Reverence; conſidering they are God's Houſes, Conſecrated to his more immediate Service, and in which he is pleaſed to vouchſafe his more peculiar Preſence.

In reſpect of this his Preſence, God declares that the Place where he appear'd to *Moſes* was Conſecrated, and therefore required him to ſhew Reverence to it*, *Put off thy ſhoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou ſtandeſt is Holy Ground.* The like was commanded to *Joſhua* upon the ſame account †, and this as a Token of Reſpect, Obedience, and Humility. The Cuſtom being taken (as ſome ‖ Conjecture) from Captives or Bond-Slaves, who uſed to go barefoot in token of their Subjection.

* Exod. 3. 5.

† Joſhua 5. 15.

‖ V. *Pool's Synopſis on* Exod.

Hence aroſe that Cuſtom amongſt the Jews for the Prieſts to enter into the Temple barefoot*. The like was obſerved amongſt the very Heathen, who had their *Nudipedalia Sacra*, and put off their Shoes when they enter'd the Temple of *Apollo* †. So ſome have obſerv'd, That even amongſt the *Turks* and *Æthiopick* Chriſtians, they go not into their Sacred Aſſemblies but with their Feet naked. That was the ancient way amongſt them of expreſſing their Reverence, as uncovering the Head is now amongſt us. And will not all theſe riſe up in Judgment againſt us, and condemn us, if we permit them to ſhew more Reſpect and Honour to the Places of their falſe Worſhip, than we to thoſe of the True.

* *Anſworth on* Exod. 30. 19.

† Mr. *Peale*, ut prius. *Id. ib.*

Thus we find St. *Paul* requiring Decency in the Church (particularly that Men be uncovered, and Women

Women covered there) † *Becauſe of the Angels*; they being ſuppoſed both under the Old and New Teſtament, to be preſent in the places of God's Publick Service, obſerving the Behaviour of all there preſent, and accuſing every Indeceney and Diſreſpect to God. † 1 Cor. 11. 10. *Dr. Hammond in loc. note, d.*

And from this their preſence it is, that God is ſaid to be peculiarly preſent in Churches (whoſe preſence in one place more than in another, in reſpect of himſelf is not eaſily conceivable) and ſo to fit them to be the Houſes of God; according to the Explication of *Jacob*, ‖ who upon the Viſion of Angels at *Luz*, awakes and ſays, *How venerable is this Place, the Lord is in it, this is none other but the Houſe of God.* ‖ Gen. 18. v. 16, 17.

Upon this Account we read that the Primitive Chriſtians were wont to ſhew very great Reſpect and Reverence in the Church, as being the ſolemn Place of Worſhip, and where God did more peculiarly manifeſt his Preſence; and are told by a learned Author, * *That they came into the Church as into the Palace of the Great King, with Fear and Trembling*; and that the Emperors themſelves, who otherwiſe never went without their Guard about them, yet when they came to go into the Church, uſed to lay down their Arms, to leave their Guard behind them, and to put off their Crowns, all as Tokens of that high Reſpect they bare to thoſe Religious Places. *Dr. Cave's Prim. Chriſtianity, part 1. cap. 6.*

Let them always then be eſteemed Holy by us, as being ſet a part for holy Uſes, and in relation to God and to their End (I mean not otherwiſe,) and let them accordingly be always treated by us.

2. If they be Houſes of Prayer, than we may hence infer the great Error of thoſe who think Preaching to be the Chief, if not the only Duty needful to be performed in theſe Places: And accordingly if they be but preſent at the Sermon, think they have done their Duty very well, although they wholly neglect the Prayers, and think it not worth their while to come to Church when only Prayers are there performed; and ſo this Error of their Judgment is the more dangerous, in that it engages them in ſo great an Error in their Practice alſo.

But had our Bleſſed Saviour been of the ſame Opinion with theſe Men, ſurely he would have called theſe Houſes of God, Houſes of Preaching, and not (as in the Text) *Houſes of Prayer*.

We may obſerve to this purpoſe, that in King *Solomon*'s excellent Prayer at the Dedication of the Temple, * All his Petitions are, That God would hear the Prayers which upon any occaſion his People ſhould put up to Heaven in or towards that his Houſe: Not one Petition for a Bleſſing upon any other Duty, as if no other but that of Prayer (at leaſtwiſe none comparable to it) was to be performed in that place.

* 1 Kings 8.

I ſpeak not this to vilifie Preaching (far be that from me,) it is an excellent Ordinance, and very needful even in this knowing Age. But yet I would not have it thruſt out Prayer, nor indeed be exalted above it; which all that are Judicious and Serious muſt grant to be an Act of Worſhip directed immediately to God, and a means to ſanctifie

ctifie Preaching, which is immediately directed to Men.

3. At all times when we approach to the House of God for Religious Worship, let us remember it is a *House of Prayer*; and then beware we no ways profane it, as the Jews did, whom our Blessed Saviour here Rebukes. And yet this I fear is too often done by too many Christians.

When we customarily neglect it, we then are Thieves (out of the Temple, though not properly in it) by robbing God of his Glory, our Religion of its Reputation, our Christian Brethren of the Assistance of our Prayers, and our own Souls of their proper Food and Nourishment.

And when we frequent these places of Worship purely to be thought Religious, in order to some secular Ends, we plainly make the *House of God* an *House of Merchandise*. And they do the same in some sort, who amidst the holy Offices of Religion employ their Thoughts upon their worldly Affairs, which ought to be wholly intent upon the weighty Duties there performed: Such make the House of God an House of Merchandise.

But if we be not Guilty of this sort of Profanation, there are others too common amongst us, which ought no less to be avoided by us *. The unseemly and rude Behaviour of many in our Churches, and that even in the time of Divine Service does too loudly testifie how little of Devotion brings them thither, and at how mean a rate they value that sacred Place, and all those holy Offices that are there performed. The Impiety and Danger of which I

* Read the Rules for our more Devout Behaviour in the time of Divine Service in the Church of *England*. Printed in 1695.

shall chuse to represent unto you in the Words of an excellent Author of our own. * *Such variety* (says he) *of rude Behaviour is there too often used in the House of God, that should an Unbeliever come into our Assemblies, he must surely* (*as St.* Paul *supposes in another Case*, 1 Cor. 14. 23.) *say*, We are mad; *to see some Gazing, some Whispering, some Laughing, others Sleeping, and perhaps the far fewer number Praying, is such a Medly, as the most brutish Idolaters never admitted in their Worship.* And then he goes on to expostulate with Christians, as (I fear) we have too much reason to do at this Day: *When* (*alas!*) *will the Church recover its ancient Title, and become* The House of Prayer? *Tis certain that according to the present appearance it may have many more proper Names, that being the least part of Business done in it. But surely God will not always be patient of such Profanation; but will, as the Scripture speaks,* Repay them to their Face, who who thus contemn him to his. *We know among Men, every one counts his House his Fortress; and an affront offer'd him there doubles the Injury, and is not only a Contempt but an Invasion: And shall it not be a proportionable Enhauncement with God also, thus to defie him within his own Doors, and approach his Presence in an impious Bravery, the more fully to shew him how little we regard him?* (So that excellent Author.)

* The Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety: By the Author of the *Whole Duty of Man*, c. 8.

4. And lastly. If it be so much for the Honor of God, and our own Advantage, as you have seen, to frequent our publick Prayers, then every one may easily infer how much it is both his Duty and

and his Intereſt to be preſent at them, as much as poſſible.

You of this Place are now very happy in having daily Opportunities of publick Prayer; (and 'tis much to be wiſhed by all ſerious Chriſtians, that every Pariſh of this Nation could enjoy, and would make a right Uſe of the like Advantage.) Think then, I beſeech ye, how heinous your Guilt will be, if you cuſtomarily and unneceſſarily neglect theſe bleſſed Opportunities. How will ye anſwer it at the laſt and great Account to your Lord and Judge, who put it into the Heart of your pious Benefactor to provide thus conveniently for your daily Performance of this great Duty, if ye ſhall ſlight it, deſpiſe it, and turn your backs upon it.

Whilſt many of you (I fear) ſpend more time every Day than would be required to this Duty, in Vanities and Impertinencies: Others, it may be, in doing nothing; and others in ſuch Buſineſs as might eaſily be contrived ſo, as not to hinder your frequenting theſe publick Prayers, and is of infinitely leſs Importance: ye will diſcover a great Diſregard to God, the Honor of your Religion, and the Care of your own Souls, if you cuſtomarily neglect theſe deſireable Opportunities.

The Primitive Chriſtians ſet us a much better Example, and very worthy our diligent Imitation, who, we are told by a learned Author of our Church; * *Were wont to flock to the Religious Solemnities, as to their Spiritual Meals and Banquets.* And then he recounts what St. *Chryſoſtom* † reports of the Church at *Antioch*; *That they would ſet aſide all Affairs at home to come to Church*; and how he tells them that *it was the great Honor of the City, not ſo*

* Dr. *Cave* in his Prim. Chriſtianity, Part 1. c. 9.

† Hom. 56. tom. 1. p. 623.

ſo much that it had large Suburbs and vaſt numbers of People, or brave Houſes with guilded Dining-Rooms, as that it had a diligent and attentive People, Churches ſo thronged and crowded, and all Perſons inflamed with ſuch an inſatiable deſire of the publick Offices of Religion; and that the commonneſs of them did not (with them *as I fear it too often does with* us) *breed a Contempt.*

Thus did true Piety prevail amongſt Chriſtians then: But (alas!) with Grief we ſee it infinitely decay'd with us now; when in ſtead of Crying out with the Pſalmiſt, † *When ſhall I come to appear in the preſence of God?* we like thoſe in *Malachi*, * *Snuff at his Service*, and ſay, *What a wearineſs is it?*

† Pſal. 42 v. 2.
* Mal. 1. 13.

But certainly that All-ſeeing Eye which diſcerns what Multitudes careleſly abſent themſelves from his Worſhip, cannot but adjudge us moſt profane Deſpiſers of his Mercy in giving and continuing to us the happy Opportunities of it.

1. *Obj.* But perhaps ſome may here object and ſay, What need theſe daily publick Prayers? We are careful to worſhip God at his Houſe on the Lord's Day, and this ſeems to be all that is required of us in the Fourth Commandment; which allows us the other ſix Days for Labour and our own Buſineſs; and therefore thus to require us to attend the daily publick Worſhip, ſeems to be an unneceſſary Service, and an infringement of that Liberty which God has graciouſly indulged to us. But,

Anſ. Let ſuch conſider, That this Objection is of equal Force againſt all occaſional Days of Faſting and Thanſgiving, which yet (I preſume) themſelves will allow of, and acknowledge they are obliged ſometimes to obſerve.

Let

Let them consider again, That the same God who gave the Fourth Commandment to the *Jews*, did also enjoyn them other Days for solemn Worship, which were to be observed even upon any of those Six Days of Labour, tho' they required strict Rest, as the Day of Atonement did, *Lev.* 23.27,28. And that they had their daily Worship notwithstanding the Fourth Commandment, at which our Blessed Saviour was frequently present, and thereby gave his Approbation of it.

And that this is no Violence to Christian Liberty, but rather a Duty recommended by Christianity appears, in that 'tis recorded by St. *Luke* in commendation of *Anna*, That *she departed not from the Temple, but served God with Prayers and Fastings Night and Day* *. And of the first Converts of Christianity, That *they continued daily with one accord in the Temple* †. And of the Disciples of Christ, that after his Ascension *They returned to Jerusalem, and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God* ‖. That is, the Temple was the place (not of their continual abode, but) of their constant daily Performance of their Devotions; as the learned Paraphrast * glosses upon those Words.

* St. Luke 2. v. 37.

† Acts 2. 46.

‖ St. Luke 24. v. 53.

* Dr. *Hammond* Annot. on Acts 1. note, d.

2. *Obj.* Others perhaps may say, They are very careful to perform this Duty in private; they pray at home every Morning and Night, and perhaps sometimes may read a Chapter in the Bible with their Families at the close of the Day: And this, they hope, is sufficient for them who have much Business on their Hands, and perhaps Families to provide for by their Labours, and they trust their gracious God will accept of what they do, and expect no more from them. To this I Answer,

1. *Ans.*

1. *Anſ.* 'Tis much to be wiſh'd, they are ſo well employ'd, as they pretend, at Home; but as much to be fear'd that they are not; for did they make a real Conſcience of performing this Duty at their own Houſes, the ſame Conſcience would bring 'em frequently to God's (unleſs they labour under ſome unhappy Prejudices againſt it,) where (I'm ſure) they might perform it better. For,

2. Suppoſe they do pray and read at Home, yet how can this excuſe their neglecting the publick Service in the Church, where the ſame Duties are performed with greater Advantage. There thou findeſt many Fires to kindle thy Zeal, the Example of others for Reverence and Order, the Decency and Suitableneſs of the Place, the more peculiar Preſence of God, and his gracious Promiſe, that he will have a more eſpecial Regard to thoſe Prayers which are put up to him in his own Houſe, in that forequoted place, 2 *Chron.* 7. 15, 16.

Does it become us to be our own Carvers, and when our gracious God calls us to worſhip him in his Houſe, to tell him in effect, he muſt excuſe us, we'l do it as we can at our own, and that muſt ſerve his turn?

3. Conſider, That altho' thou perhaps mayſt duely perform theſe Duties at Home, yet others from thy Example may think it needleſs to come to publick Prayers, and wholly omit them in private alſo; and ſo thou fall under the Guilt of Scandal, in its proper Senſe, againſt which a Woe is denounced by our Lord, St. *Matth.* 18. 7. *Woe be to that Man by whom Offences come.*

4. Conſider, That the Apoſtles and Primitive Chriſtians (who ſurely knew how to pray at Home as

as well as any of us, yet) were very conſtant at the publick Places of Worſhip, tho' to the great hazard of their Lives or Liberties for ſo doing; and left this expreſs Command behind them to all Chriſtians, * *Not to forſake the Aſſembling of themſelves together.* Not to forſake the publick Religious Aſſemblies, tho' to avoid Perſecution (as was the unhappy Caſe of the Chriſtians at that time,) much leſs to avoid ſome ſmall and very tolerable Inconveniency to our ſecular Affairs (as is generally the worſt of the Caſe with us now,) which that God whom we ſerve can (and certainly will) abundantly Recompence to us. —— But then let me add,

* Heb. 10. v. 25.

5. In the laſt place, If any well diſpoſed Chriſtians be ſo ingaged in ſome needful Buſineſs, or have ſuch urgent Neceſſities to provide for by their Labours, that they cannot attend the daily publick Service of our Church, without great Inconveniency; and yet have really a due Eſteem for it, and would with all their Hearts be daily preſent at it, did their indiſpenſable Occaſions permit them; ſuch, I will preſume to ſay, ſhall be excuſed by our gracious Lord, who has declared *He will have Mercy* (Mercy to our ſelves, as well as to others) *rather than Sacrifice*, St. *Matth.* 9. 13. Such ſhall undoubtedly be accepted on the Account of their Wills and real Deſires; and (by the Goodneſs of our God) in a good meaſure partake of the benefit of our publick Prayers, as if themſelves had actually been preſent at them.

But for all others, who have not this Neceſſity to plead for their Abſence; who eaſily might have been preſent at the daily Service, had they been

really willing, such must not expect to be so excused; and therefore, I hope and pray, they will be prevailed with, so to acquit themselves in reference to this Duty, that God may be duly Honour'd by them; true Piety and Devotion encouraged and advanced; their own Comfort and Prosperity promoted in this World; and their eternal Happiness (by the Mercies of God, and the Merits of his Son) secur'd to them in the next.

† The Widows of the Alms-House, adjoyning to the Chapel.

One word, in the close of all, To you † in particular, for whose sakes more immediately your worthy Benefactor has erected this House of Prayer.

You, by his great Bounty, are in a more especial manner devoted to, and engaged in the Service of God; you have not the Necessities of this Life to provide for by your Labours, nor the anxious Cares of it to perplex and distract your Thoughts; you have a comfortable Provision made you, by his Piety and Charity, both for your Souls and Bodies.

Remember always how much you are obliged both to God and him, to answer the great End of this his Bounty to you, by living to the Honour of God and your Religion; particularly by a constant and devout attendance at the Prayers and Sacraments which will be performed in this Place.

Be very careful, I beseech you, to approve your selves *Widows indeed*, that so you may be worthy of that Honor (*i.e.* Relief and Maintenance, as the Original Word * often signifies in Scripture) which the Apostle would have to be given to such, in 1 *Tim.* 5. 3. *Honor* (*i.e.* Relieve) *Widows that are Widows indeed.*

* τιμὴ. v. Dr. *Hammond* on 1 *Tim.* c. 5. note, d.

And who are such, he tells us, *v.* 5, 7, 10. (And such I hope, and heartily pray, *All you may be,*)

She

She truſteth in God, and continueth in Supplications and Prayers night and day; She is blameleſs, and well reported of for good Works, and has diligently followed every good Work.

This is the ſum of what your Bleſſed Saviour, and (I preſume to ſay) your pious Benefactor alſo, expects from you, (*viz.*) That you be Conſtant and Serious at Prayers and Sacraments; That your Converſation be Blameleſs, and of good Report (particularly, for Humility, Gravity, Sobriety, Contentedneſs, Weanedneſs from the World, Love and Peaceableneſs amongſt your ſelves and towards all Men, Graces which more eſpecially adorn your Station;) and that you *be diligent Followers of every good Work.*

Then ſhall you approve your ſelves *Widows indeed*, in the Apoſtles Senſe, to the Honor of your Lord, the Reputation of your Religion, the great Satisfaction of your Benefactor, and the mighty Encouragement of ſuch Pious and Charitable Acts; to your own great Comforts whilſt you live in this World, and to your eternal Happineſs in the World to come.

Which eternal Happineſs God, in his due time, make you, and all of us Partakers of, for the ſake of his dear Son Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour: To whom, with the Father and Bleſſed Spirit be aſcribed all Obedience, Adoration and Praiſe, now and for evermore. Amen.

For the Direction and Aſſiſtance of the more Ignorant, let me here add,

'Tis very Adviſeable that all Perſons, when they intend to partake of our publick Prayers, haſten to the

the Houſe of Prayer as ſoon as the Bell begins to call to it, that ſo they may have ſome little time, before Prayers begin, to raiſe their Devotions, and fix their Thoughts upon the Duties before them, by conſidering the Weightineſs of them, and the Preſence of God; humbly and earneſtly Begging his Aſſiſtance in the Performance of them; which may be done, by thoſe who are not better provided, in this, or the like ſhort Prayer following.

Let thy merciful Ears, O Lord, be open to the Prayers of thy humble Servants: And grant that we may now, and at all times, ask faithfully, and obtain effectually through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

Or this.

Moſt gracious God, who haſt commanded us to pray without ceaſing, *Incline my Heart to this Duty; and ſo aſſiſt me with thy holy Spirit now and at all times in the Performance of it, that I may ſo ask that I may receive; and ſo hear thy Word that I may practice it; and by theſe Opportunities (for which I bleſs thy Neme) I may daily more and more improve in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs, until I come to thine everlaſting Kingdom, through Jeſus Chriſt my Lord and only Saviour.* Amen.

At the Concluſion of Divine Service, and before thou riſeſt from thy Knees, ſay to thy ſelf this, or the like ſhort Prayer.

Lord in Mercy hear our Prayers, and relieve all our Wants. Continue unto us theſe means of Grace; make me, and all that profeſs thy Name to delight in them, with Reverence and godly Fear to approach unto them, and always to become better by them, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

21 NO 64

Or this.

Bleſſed be thy Name, O God, for this Opportunity of waiting upon thee in thine Houſe; Lord, pardon the Iniquity of my holy Things, and make me a partaker of the Benefit of thoſe Prayers which have been put up unto thee at this time. In Mercy continue unto me theſe Opportunities, and fit me more and more for thy Service here, and for thy Kingdom hereafter, for Jeſus Chriſt his ſake. Amen.

FINIS.